

# Blithe Spirit



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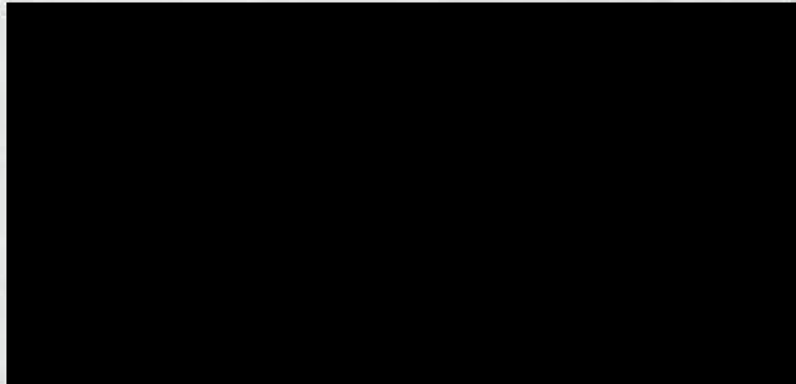

# Blithe Spirit

Volume 4 Number 3 August 1994

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**Blithe Spirit** welcomes, and exists as a forum for diverse statements about the writing and appreciation of haiku and kindred forms of verse. The Editor takes entire responsibility for the selection of items for publication.

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## Editorial

I have been struck by how much editorial responsibilities are like marriage. In order to keep up the reader's interest I must add some spice to our relationship by the addition of some new sections, now and again. I must also ensure that what is beloved and familiar continues to satisfy. And, occasionally, I must acknowledge and appreciate those who work behind the scenes in order that they don't feel taken for granted. So I thought it appropriate to inform new members to **BHS**, and remind continuing ones, how the committee allots its tasks. James Kirkup is our president. David Cobb produces **The Brief**, edits **The Pathway** and performs the duties of secretary. David has recently passed on the role of treasurer to his wife, Panne. Colin Blundell is responsible for the production of **Blithe Spirit**, from setting up ready-typed text to arranging photocopying and hand-making the finished product in his garden shed; the latter process now takes one and a half days, quite a reduction, using the Japanese principle of *kaizen*, from the three days it took originally. Richard Goring administrates the annual James Hackett Award. Stephen Gill is our events officer. I, as editor, choose what goes into the magazine. To all the above named I would like to say thank you for your efforts on behalf of the readership.

And now for the readers... The introduction of another theme for haiku inspiration has been very successful as you will see from our **Spiders** section in this issue. We will certainly return to this idea again. However, next time, to augment the seasoning, I invite readers to send in their favourite haiku with a short explanation, say five lines, of why they like it. Bring a glint to your editor's eye by continuing to send your **Summer** haiku, and submissions for **Gorse Blossoms** and **Senryu Pie**. Articles are also welcome. So are good ideas. If you have an idea for a section that could be incorporated into **Blithe Spirit** please let me know. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Jackie Hardy

## Season Corner: Spring

Swallows' nests  
Among the eaves of the 'Woolwich'  
Threatened eviction

A tiny aphid  
Climbing the wrinkles on my hand  
Quite a task

*Cicely Hill*

Magnolia blooms  
Held high out of reach  
On the grass:  
A single petal

Leaving town  
Just as the cherry blossoms  
Reach their best

*Andreas Schöter*

children panicking  
out of the tiger cage  
a wasp

spring fair —  
the wind freeing  
free balloons

*David Cobb*

I prod a parcel  
my children's eyes light up —  
the first of April

on the motorway  
signs of an early Spring  
motorists' elbows

*Charles Brien*

spring dusk  
children's voices fading...  
a call for supper

*Yoko Ogino*

beside narrow road  
double yellow lines  
dandelions

*David Walker*

the fanfare over,  
coffee-coloured daffodils  
leave their green streamers

*Petrouchka*

our bikes submerged  
in the river's grassy bank

*Frank Dullaghan*

through the spring mist  
a brass cannon points  
at a midday moon

into  
my wine glass  
a fallen cherry petal

*Kohjin Sakamoto*

threat of rain —  
tumbling from the sky  
swifts

*Nika*

spring snow —  
on scumbled slopes  
a scattering of lambs

*Jackie Hardy*

reading  
under the cherry tree  
distracted  
by the occasional petal

*Susan Rowley*

combing the shingle  
my fingers find a flat stone  
to skim the spring tide

*Antony Cox*

a tree frog  
closing his eyes  
on the heart of the orchid

*Ikuyo Yoshimura*

Chasing a red squirrel  
To the back of a tree,  
I find only elm flowers  
And a robin singing.

(Chenonçeau, Touraine, 4/74)

*Tito*

Outside the classroom  
the bicycles stand all day  
in spring rain

People come and go.  
The roses he pruned stand gaunt  
in the warm spring sun.

*David Steele*

spring sun  
brightens the alleyway —  
glass fragments glitter

*Martin Lucas*



## Museum of Literature Haiku Award

Cicely Hill writes:-

My choice is Tito's

In the tiny purplish mushroom,  
All of the dampness,  
All of the twilight,  
Of some distant forest floor.

I have chosen this haiku partly for the sound of the words, the imagery and the sense of season. 'Purplish', exact where the dampness and twilight are more vague, contrasts the tiny mushroom with the forest it evokes and whose essence it contains. This purplishness reminds us of the texture, the fleshiness and particularly the scale of the mysterious little object — that it is small; that we are small and the damp, twilight forest is great.

\*

## Tanka

this clematis vine,  
purple flowers sparkling,  
trails across the dying hedge;  
you left in silence,  
your anger veiled with tears

under grey clouds,  
a lone goose flies northward;  
how still this garden,  
with its blue iris fallen  
from the weight of rain

*J.P. Trammell*

Early in our correspondence I posed the following question to my mentor R.H.Blyth:-

Where in this world of NOW  
That I worship with wonder  
Is the ANCIENT ALONENESS  
Of my only moment  
Undreamed?

Though Blyth never offered a direct answer, in time I resolved this spiritual question through further study and Zen meditation. Key to this understanding was *interpenetration*, a Zen principle that Blyth subsequently emphasised in his foreword to my first book of haiku poetry. I came to realize that interpenetration exemplifies the spiritual Oneness that is not only at the heart of Zen, but is the mystical basis of every major religion. As it turned out, Blyth did indeed finally answer my question, albeit elliptically. He knew I had to grow into the understanding that the interpenetration he discerned in my haiku was an intuitive, existential realization of the Zen dictum: 'Samsara is Nirvana — Nirvana is Samsara'. This is how I finally became conscious of the Oneness that can profoundly influence poetry and life.

All true haiku correctly reflect the *concrete*, categorical world of a myriad separate things, that is, Samsara. But through an intuitive interpenetration of poet and subject some haiku can also, quite mysteriously, intimate Samsara's metaphysical counterpart Nirvana: the ultimate spiritual identity we all share. However, in haiku poetry the concrete Suchness of the thing-in-itself must prevail, or the haiku ceases to be worthy of the name. The point is that haiku demand not only a centered consciousness, but an all-compassionate heart as well. To spiritually interpenetrate — to become one with things — to find our self in union with all things — is to live the Way of Zen. And in so far as this spirit is manifest in syllables, it can become a way of haiku.

Spiritual interpenetration is an ontological state in which a transcendent sense of identity is intuited between what we usually think of as ourselves and other things. In haiku this interpenetration results when a compassionate and intuitive identification (most often unconsciously realized) exists between the poet and the subject of the moment.

Left by the tide  
within a shallowing pool:  
a frantic minnow.

A bitter morning:  
sparrows sitting together  
without any necks.\*

Interpenetration in haiku is however a formidable quality, as Blyth recognises: 'To attain this ability to express the immediate sensation, to pour all of oneself into the thing, and let the thing penetrate every part of one's self, needs much travail of mind and body.' (Blyth in Hackett) And, being a state of spirit, interpenetration is essentially transcendental and difficult to impart through words. However, Blyth's following descriptions of Zen apply as well to interpenetration, and show the mystical essence they share:-

In Zen, the soul must 'become the thing it contemplates'... it means that state... in which we are not separated from other things, are indeed identical with them, and yet retain our own individuality and personal peculiarities... The aim of Zen, the aim of the poetical life, is to reach and remain in that undifferentiated state where subject and object are one... (Blyth)

Now centred upon  
the flavor of an old bone  
the mind of my dog.

In her book **The Haiku Form**, Joan Giroux states that spiritual identification in haiku is not merely "cute anthropomorphism" but is '...an instant in which man becomes united to an object, virtually becomes the object, and realizes the eternal, universal truth contained in being...' (Giroux)

Each kelp in the tide  
comes at last to rest, beside  
its anchor of rock.

When an intuited sense of identity takes place between poet and subject, it is an important part of the haiku moment, and should be manifest in the finished haiku poem. But again, I stress that such interpenetration, when it does occur, is often achieved unconsciously. In any case, the sense of compassionate empathy *intuitively* felt by the poet must be a true feeling

\* Haiku in this essay are by the author

from our heart of hearts. Spiritual interpenetration must *not* be mistaken for anthropomorphism; such an attribution of strictly human characteristics to things is merely egocentric. Genuine examples of interpenetration between poet and subject testify to nothing less than a spiritual union. That interpenetration was a cardinal principle to Bashō is borne out by his advocacy of 'entering into the object, perceiving its delicate life, and feeling its feelings, whereupon a poem speaks for itself.' (BHS Consensus) And again, from Bashō: '...you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one... However well-phrased your poetry may be, if the object and yourself are separate — then your poetry is not true poetry but a semblance of the real thing.' (Yuasa)

Now free in the world  
the old parakeet just perches:  
his loneliness!

The scriptural basis for discerning Oneness in some haiku is found in the 'perennial philosophy' of various religions:

This entire Earth — is it not myself? ...a great loving heart transforms this earthly world into one of splendor and mutual fusion, and this is where the Buddha is always abiding. (D.T.Suzuki)

He is One, the lord and innermost Self of all; of one form, he makes of himself many forms... He became all things whatsoever... (Prabhavananda/Upanishads)

D.T.Suzuki suggests that interpenetration can intimate something cosmic, quite beyond the spiritual union between the poet and things '...an infinite fusion or penetration of all things, each with its individuality yet with something universal in it.' (Suzuki)

Chopping kindling from  
a knotty block...in each stick  
a part of its shape.

A spider crouches  
at the center of this empty web,  
trusting his design.

Spiritual interpenetration with all things is not confined to the sages of

Eastern philosophy, as the medieval Christian theologian Meister Eckhart makes clear: '...God is in all things ...Every single creature is full of God ...all creatures are interdependent ...We must learn to break through things (through interpenetration) if we are to grasp God in them.' (Fox/Eckhart)

Look at this fly  
that long since met eternity,  
his kneeling remains.

The mystical scriptures of India provide vivid examples of how spiritual interpenetration has influenced the culture of Asia. There, the 'all-compassionate heart' is commonly to be seen to embrace not only humans, but animals, insects and the whole ecological kingdom of life. For, as revealed in the Upanishads: 'The lord is the one life shining forth from every creature... Whatever...creatures are, whether a lion or a tiger, or a boar, or a worm or a gnat, or a mosquito... All these have their self in him alone. He is the truth ...THAT ART THOU.' (Prabhavananda/Upanishads)

Hardy ant, even  
heavily burdened you climb  
the sheer mountain wall.

Spiritual interpenetration is repeated throughout the Upanishads, whose very song — the spiritual Oneness of all things — is 'That Art Thou'. So brief a statement, yet how very profound it is. For encapsulated here is a spiritual vision of cosmic proportions: a sacred Gandian view of *Oneness* that is all too rare in this world — namely that the true disciple knows another's woes as his own. The same view of Oneness and compassion is echoed by the Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart: 'What happens to another, be it bad or good, pain or joy, ought to be as if it happened to you... To find God you must become One...' (Fox/Eckhart) A transcendental sense of identity clearly recognised by Blyth: '...the Indian (and the Ancient Taoist) view of the world is mutually interpenetrative, each thing containing all things, all-things concentrating itself into each thing.' (Blyth) And from Lao Tsu himself: 'Be at one with the dust of the earth. This is primal union. This is the highest state of man.' (Lao Tsu)

Gusts of ocean wind  
wander this deserted beach  
drifting all...to one.

Miraculously, some haiku poems can be seen as veritable mirrors of the universal Spirit, in which the 'King of Emptiness' recognises its Self in all things. For, as Zen masters well know, '...the Buddha-eye is everywhere, seeing itself.' (Blyth) And Nyogen Senzaki notes that: 'It is the inherent nature of the Buddha-body that it individualizes itself in myriad manifestations in the phenomenal world. It does not stand outside particular existences, but abides in them, animates them, and makes them move freely... Its essence is infinite, but its manifestations are finite and limited.' (Senzaki)

Bug lights on the leaf,  
takes a wild ride through the rapids,  
then flies away.

In summary, spiritual interpenetration creates the sense of Oneness extolled in the 'perennial philosophy' by the mystics of every religion. Although a profound quality in haiku and one well known to Bashō as we have seen, such identification is all too commonly overlooked by poets and commentators alike. Interpenetration in haiku exemplifies the Vedantic theme of That Art Thou. Such a union between poet and subject is ultimately nothing less than an intuitive recognition of the One within All that abides in becoming. Incredible as it may seem, the *haiku moment* then becomes a mirror of the universal Spirit: the illusory veil of multiplicity (or Maya) is seen through and our *true* identity recognizes its cosmic Self in all things, every moment.

I submit that the living and writing of haiku can become, for some, a spiritual Way, a Way of living awareness, as well as a Way of poetry. A Way that leads to a reverence for life and, when combined with mind-centering meditation, to possibly even a realization of the infinite Spirit — the Ancient One whom we all *really* are. For, as mystics know from experience: 'This Ancient One is unborn, eternal, imperishable...' and 'THAT ART THOU.' (Prabhavananda/Upanishads)

This blessed present,  
wherever I look I see  
nothing — but the Lord. (Buddha)

Note: This article (unpublished) is excerpted from a longer work in progress.

Book titles with page numbers for the various authors (shown in parentheses) can be provided.

## Gorse Blossoms

'when gorse is out of bloom, kissing's out of fashion'  
other seasons, all seasons, no seasons, haiku et al...

the night bus —  
dark shapes clamber into  
a little light

*Dick Pettit*

sunrise  
the robin's song  
deep red

inchworm  
not quite reaching  
the leaf beyond

*Nika*

changing trains at night  
lost in a maze of dark towns  
where snow has fallen

*Colin Blundell*

the open road  
— packed with Bank Holiday  
optimists

*Susan Rowley*

behind them    low-flying aircraft trail    their noise

*Jackie Hardy*

From a carob tree  
the chattering of sparrows —  
my friend growing older

*Barry Atkinson*

Scuttling across the track  
three wild boar  
break my solitary dawn

*Ken Jones*

how pleasant — just once  
not to see Canary Wharf  
through the morning mist

*Martin Lucas (after Bashō)*

Overhead cable  
hums in the wind — on the grass  
a dead crane

*Patricia V Dawson*

as I run downhill  
an indecisive pigeon  
the colour in its wings

*Fred Schofield*

telephone call  
the receiver smells  
of chopped shallots

*Ruth Robinson*



## At the Edge of Unfolding Rich Diversity: A Profile of BHS David Cobb, Dee Evetts and James Kirkup

BHS was founded with the clear aim of promoting a genre which, whatever its antecedents, could contribute something fresh and vital to English poetry. Haiku, we felt, was going through a process of exciting development as it became assimilated into Western literary culture. In other words, BHS was to be a poetry society. At the same time we, as founders, were well aware of the interest in haiku which poets share with followers of Zen Buddhism and philosophy, and also with students/scholars of Japanese literature. They appeared to us natural, if sometimes tendentious, allies.

As George Swede (quoted at the beginning of *Towards a Consensus*) has said, 'For some, haiku is a kind of poetry, to be treated as an artistic creation, mouldable; for others, it has become an aspect of Zen practice, to be treated in a manner consonant with other types of meditation.' Perhaps for many of us haiku is a bit of both.

That, as we spin around, we are always liable to veer off in one of three directions, was exemplified when we had to categorise *The Genius of Haiku* for the benefit of the book trade. To us it was obvious that it should be put on the shelf marked 'Poetry/Literary Criticism'; others protested that to them it was equally clear that it belonged under 'Religion/Philosophy/Zen' or 'Oriental Literature'. (The back cover had space enough to include the lot, but *Whitaker's* does not tolerate such prolixity.)

Against this background, we feel that a few remarks about George Marsh's *Profile of Brian Tasker* (Vol 4 No 2) may not be out of place. Let's start by saying that, even if one's mind is geared towards the poetic interpretation of haiku, the profile stimulates some worthwhile thinking. But the words Brian is quoted as saying, 'I am not prepared to stand idly by and see haiku diluted down to personal taste', rather raised our triumviral eyebrows.

We might understand this statement in one of two ways: (1) There is one correct way of writing haiku and I can tell you what it is; (2) Haiku isn't a cockshy you can throw anything at from any angle. We believe Brian intended the second meaning, and if so, we agree with him.

This, after all, is something the founders of BHS took a stance on from the

outset. We wouldn't pander to people whose material did not respond to the basic criteria of haiku, just in order to cultivate a membership. At the same time, with our avowed poetic aims, the word 'mouldable' (in George Swede's statement quoted above) was considered crucial.

Now, as then, we do not believe in the depersonalisation of haiku or in the negation of individuality. We do believe that egocentricity and anthropomorphism are anathema to haiku. And there need be no contradiction between those statements.

*Joie de vivre* and *carpe diem* seem to us reasons just as valid for engaging in the haiku life, as much ways of reacting positively to perceptions of transience and mutability, as the search for 'liberation' (as Zen followers understand it) and for *satori*. (For all we know, they may ultimately attain the same end.) Haiku may reach beyond simple acceptance of life (its pleasure, its pain, its diversity, its monotony even) to celebration, to 'having life more abundantly'. As haiku poets we should relish our different voices, preoccupations and ways of asserting 'lifeliness'. (Bashō, Buson, Issa, Shiki, Kyoshi, not to mention Hackett, Kirkup, Evetts, Tasker, Uncle Tom Copley and all, are quite distinctive.) Let them all bloom, humble weeds by the wayside, like shepherd's purse.

We hope therefore that Brian may agree with us that 'personal taste' is not necessarily a 'dilution'. If it is real 'taste', if it is poetic power, our personality will enrich our work, and we can all benefit from the diversity. Does not Brian himself say, in his most recent, interesting dissertation, *Haiku and Zen: the Bodhisattva of Forgetfulness*, that 'the path to liberation' is one which everybody walks on their own?

Perhaps the last word belongs with R.H. Blyth, even though he is sometimes accused of overidentifying haiku with Zen. *The Genius of Haiku* records (p 10 para 2) his hatred of -isms (NB 'poetry' is not an -ism). On page 133 he tells us 'I feel inclined to warn you against a humourless Zen. The secret of life consists in being always and never serious'. And finally (page 119), among the 13 characteristics which he maintained to be essential for the creation and appreciation of haiku was freedom of mind.

Can we agree that 'freedom of mind' includes 'liberation' as followers of Zen understand it, but that this is not the only kind of 'freedom of mind' which yields haiku?

Note: Adrian Pinnington, in "Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits" ed Nish, pub Japan Library and Curzon Press, 1994, reminds us that R.H.Blyth 'in fact uses the word Zen in two rather different ways: one meaning is "the state of mind in which we are not separated from other things, indeed are identical with them, and yet retain our own individualities and personal peculiarities", and the other is "a body of experience and practice begun by Daruma". It is the first, general meaning which is far more important to Blyth, and this seems to have just as deep roots in Western Romanticism as in Eastern thought.'

\*

## A Bashō Motif

His body grew quite cold.  
Stumbling among dog's bones and things,  
He sensed the evening loneliness  
Turn even paler.

At the entrance to a village, he found the way at last.  
A scrawny cow was keeping watch.  
There was no sign of human habitation in those houses,  
But barbed wire strung out everywhere.

The village has already been occupied  
By something.

*Murano Shirō* (1901-75)

From: Modern Japanese Poetry  
Selected and translated by James Kirkup  
University of Queensland Press

(I think this modern evocation of Bashō may refer to his many wanderings or to his final haiku about his dreams wandering over a deserted moor — JK)

## Senryu Pie

the hairless guru  
advocates Total Vision  
facing half his group

*Colin Blundell*

three bishops  
rejecting women, embrace  
Our Lady in Rome

Summer leave  
all the goldshop's floor's  
a crêche

In the Principal's room  
approved Art greets you  
at eye-level

*Dick Pettit*

alone in the gym —  
scoring the winning basket  
again and again

*Nika*

sunday sermon  
pneumatic drill

*Martin Lucas*

After the aquarium  
Eating fish:  
Mistakenly pouring  
Sugar on my chips.

(San Francisco, 9/78)

*Tito*

coming from behind  
a silent jogger passes  
too close in the dark

*Annie Bachini*

Growing old the light  
on the birthday cake  
gets brighter

*Hamish Turnbull*

Elderly couple  
Crossing the market square  
Limping in the same leg

Unknown to him  
The glint of silverfish  
Among his health foods

*Cicely Hill*

Our consensus colours fly blithely from the extended battlements of the west wing; need one say more regarding haiku writing? Some occasional pointing to the stonework perhaps? That old favourite METAPHOR, for example?

For some, metaphor may seem only something that poets make of nouns, verbs and adjectives to provide a sort of new 'poetic truth'. For others, the statements: 'all words may be metaphors', or 'metaphor is inescapable' might still be taken to mean only that words convey associations, for example, consider the word 'sunflower'. In fact, metaphor is an integral part of language structure, imbuing everything from the nuts and bolts of syntax to high levels of conceptual thought — exerting influence both within the visible spectrum of verbal communication and beyond both ends. Read *Metaphors We Live By* — Lakoff and Johnson.

Aphasia research long since showed communication through language to balance its way along metaphoric and metonymic lines, these being as it were, different but connected axes within language structure. It boils down to this: metaphoric/metonymic constructions are part of the brain's neurolinguistic wiring and, whether through innate or cultural influence, we each develop inbuilt personal communicative styles and preferences. A subconscious tendency to write metaphorically need not mean an inability to consciously edit out metaphor from our writing; but metaphoric or metonymic style does seem a set quality of mind.

Do the very young use metaphor? 2—3 year olds can be very creative in finding original effective expression — 'the water is laughing' instead of 'boiling'. Evidence is that children only *understand* metaphor at a much later age — against the fact that a child's understanding of language normally outstrips its production. Still, the very young do sometimes seem to be reaching for the inarticulate — and metaphor's function is to express the otherwise inexpressible.

Good original metaphor fuses differences between 'things' not usually associated into an identity — providing an overall semantic gestalt or 'perceptual truth'; a powerful tool of concision for accurate shading, it both enriches and evolves the language. Initially personal, its power undeniably tends to close off alternative perceptions — metaphors *direct the reading*.

Haiku does not — could not — claim its particular poetic consciousness more valid than another; rather it asks observance of a particular format, saying: as near as possible, tell it as it is; be objective not subjective; do not direct the reading; share a presence *at* the perception, but not the personal perception itself. Haiku eschews metaphor as contrived over-intrusion of self, seeking instead simple direct spontaneity. We might object: how non-subjective can we be when even the primary perception of images to be juxtaposed is forced upon us by mental conjury? — When direct spontaneous perceptions are often far from simple (needing revision to simplify, perhaps) and that the same ‘complex’ perceptions can yet have reader-immediacy when the juxtaposition of really simple images may not — not to any obvious purpose, that is; and how consistent is haiku in spirit in allowing overt puns and poetic allusions, which surely direct one to wide pastures of extraneous thought? No matter, experience instructs; the mind allows us to peek at what it thinks and we edit; but how far *can* we — and *should* we always?

Courage, fellow novices — much metaphor is still out there. Patient analysis will instruct as to what is or isn’t acceptable; and, remember, criticism also has its inbuilt errors of subjective preference. Consider:-

1. A commonplace: Old Masters used metaphor. Many see effective haiku as complex metaphors anyway.

The old pond, ah!  
A frog jumps in:  
The water’s sound!

Forget flog, Japanese students told me — he’s just seasonal. Think instead: sound disturbs silence. Was Bashō saying: water’s sound reminds us of coming rain — synaesthetic/symbolic metaphor? Certainly he reached for meaning beyond words, creating from experience and not on the spot perception.

the stillness —  
soaking into stones  
cicada’s cry

Bashō uses ‘shimiiru’: soaking as water into stone. Limited word choice, or deliberate metaphor? Either way the haiku works, not seeming to ‘tell

it as it is' except in spirit, but the metaphor has clear sensual immediacy. Neither haiku *seems* to close off alternative perceptions; each *seems* to offer direct simplicity.

## 2. Compare:-

- |                                   |                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| (a)                               | (b)              |
| over a meat scrap,                | the silk-tearing |
| waiting for the down-turned thumb | biwa's current — |
| a chain-mailed starling           | autumn's voice   |

(a) is definitely *not* haiku as (b) *is*; but compare Buson's 'silk-tearing' = 'river noise' and considerable poetic allusion (**Haiku Handbook** pp213-215) to 'chain-mail' = 'spring plumage'. Could poetic allusion to Quo Vadis make a difference? Doubtful — I can though vouch for the instantaneity of perception (and reader immediacy?). One must rely on one's 'haiku feel', coarse as it might be, in such cases.

- 3.
- Perseid shower  
snuffs out  
my need to sneeze

Is it a pun? Is it a metaphor? No, it's a haiku — apparently. Strangely *feeling* more spontaneous than contrived, this might be either. For me, the seeming confusion of imagery disturbs any sense of immediacy. As a metaphor 'snuffs out' *seems* inapt: is a sneeze like a candle-wick? a life? A metaphor should enhance our perception of both its 'tenor' and its 'vehicle'. As a pun, surely snuff should evoke a sneeze — literally snuff out. The haiku could lead this way, the Perseids stimulating the explosive expulsion of the stimulus etc. But overall, the imagery is too ambiguous. Perseids are of course seasonal. How about:-

a sneeze  
snuffs out  
a shower of Perseids                   ?

4. A final anecdote. Recently I have been reading Literary Theory. Blimey! Some of it seems a right load of academic bums on seats, I can tell you [the text is yours]. It turns out that Literature has all the charismatic uncertainty of Quantum Mechanics; in fact texts only have meaning when



someone actually reads them — and then they can mean anything at all. Apparently even semantic fragments can exert a charm of their own; take metaphor, for instance. I was talking the other day to my other self, Bashō Moto ob. (sadly, only one of us is real — the other is virtually non-existent). What *is* metaphor? I asked. Where would I be without it? he answered. He told me then about a new kind of metaphor — he called it Schrödinger's metaphor, or [met.]<sub>s</sub>, after some well-known cat apparently. Seemingly, this elusive trope can pop into and out of existence at the most unpredictable moments. My virtual friend went on to explain: imagine 100 Temple Monkeys sitting down at 100 typewriters to write a haiku (much more likely than Shakespeare!). Suddenly, two monkeys at the same instant produce identical replicas of a famous Bashō haiku (Matsuo, *not* my friend). Now what literary status can we attach to these haiku? Well, it turns out that one haiku is flawed by [met.]<sub>s</sub>, and therefore worthless; the other? well, that is perfect — but also worthless, because of course monkeys cannot know their haiku from their origami. Amazing stuff, isn't it? Of course, I exhibited initial disbelief, but the matter was resolved in Vol 4:1 of *Blithe Spirit*, which contained an indisputable case of [met.]<sub>s</sub>:

the dandelion seed  
on its way  
to someone else's garden

There it is — in the middle line; do you see it? Good! I must confess, I can't see it at all — even now I know it's there — or is it?

You see my point about Literary Theory? I mean, there I was one autumn, slaving away in the garden over a hot hoe and in a sudden haiku moment I saw a host of dandelion seed pass overhead. (Plural? Gosh!) I felt the sudden pang of wry humour coming on, and simultaneously a feeling of the eternity of all things. Oh well, I feel inclined to write:-

— sudden clatter of keys.  
Aye, Will — forgive them,  
they know not what they do.

## Spiders

Spider in the bath  
with two legs more  
than the plughole

*Patricia V Dawson*



conversation palls —  
my eyes follow a spider  
crossing white damask

*Colin Blundell*

caught  
by a drop of water  
a spider in the bathroom

*Yoko Ogino*

disused hangar  
draped with spiders' webs —  
a no-fly zone

*Charles Brien*

hi, spider, busy  
clearing out the attic?  
— so am I!

Berlin Wall  
a spider has webbed a hole  
and fled

*David Cobb*

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Spider in the bath  
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— so am I!

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a spider has webbed a hole  
and fled

*David Cobb*

the legs I chased —  
brittle-dry now

last year's spider

beneath the carpet

*Petrouchka*

a spider  
hanging from  
a crescent moon

starlight clear...  
clearer still, dewdrops  
on a spider's web

*Kohjin Sakamoto*

the web shimmers  
the husk of a ladybird  
still vivid in red and black

*Edward D Glover*

at the end  
of a single strand of web  
one petal never falls

*Susan Rowley*

ballooning minute  
money spider, crash landing  
weightless on my hand

*David Blaber*

only when it moves  
seeing the stone-coloured spider  
on the path

*Annie Bachini*

Between two girders  
held in a state of suspense  
the spider's web

*Ernest Sheppard*

Never at home  
spider's web  
in my slipper

*Hamish Turnbull*

running on my face  
how small the spider to start  
such a tickle

*Eric Speight*

spider drops its thread  
from my clothes-line —  
hangs beside the socks

*Katherine Gallagher*

## The Pathway

This section welcomes haiku, senryu and tanka from anyone — member of BHS or not. Each poem should be in two different language versions — the ORIGINAL (any language) and the TRANSLATION(S) (English, French or German). The Pathway aims to link those writing in widely-spoken and less widely-spoken languages.

**Tsunehiki Hoshino (Japanese) and James Kirkup/Makoto Tamaki (English)**

yaminiseo tsukekeikanno mirusakura

Standing with back to  
the dark — policeman's view  
of cherry blossoms.

**Bruce Leeming (Scots and English)**

I' the smirr  
heich abune the hotchin toun  
ane maw wimplin

In the drizzle  
high above the busy town  
one gull meandering

**Milijan Despotović (Serb and English)**

Jesenji oblak  
premešta mesečinu  
niz voćnjak.

An autumn cloud  
moves moonlight here and there  
about the orchard

Zagledan u cvet  
kantariona. Nešto me  
pitala starica.

Absorbed  
by the camomile. What was it  
the old woman asked me?

**Jackie Hardy (English) and Ernest Sheppard (German)**

Sunday morning —  
fingers read teethmarks  
in the headlines

Sonntagmorgens früh  
spüren Finger Zahndellen  
in den Schlagzeilen

**Delka Rubčić (Croat) and Marijan Čekolj/David Cobb (English)**

Kamičak: pljus, pljas!  
Kružići vode šire  
zjene dječaka.

Splashes of pebbles —  
circles of water widening  
in the lad's eyes

Davor Čevanić (Croat) and Marijan Čekolj/David Cobb (English)

Ledena pista  
Velike ptice miruju —  
vrabac uzlijeće

Frozen runway.  
The large birds are motionless,  
a sparrow flies.

\*

**Dawn Chorus Meet** Saturday 16th April 1994 (Groups 1 & 2) ML

There was a moment around 4.30am when the venture seemed like madness. We were in Broadmoor Bottom; it was raining and still dark. Our party of nine was crossing a swamp by the light of three torches, gingerly stepping from tree stump to tree stump; occasionally someone would slip welly-deep into the water. We got through, of course, and up the hillside into position to look down on the treetops of a valley alive with birds, all singing as the dawn brightened: the robin first and then an owl hoot; then thrushes, blackbirds, wrens, a goldcrest... and a distant cockerel.

*Doro no iro mademo yasashiki asa no sō*  
Even the colour of mud  
Takes on a gentle beauty  
At this time of  
Morning birdsong.

Spring night's end —  
Approaching in rain  
Silhouette of my friend:  
The first birdcall.

*Satomi (trans SHG)*

*Tito*

conifers taper  
darkly up to the dawn sky  
how light the first song!

*Norman*

As the rain relented we enjoyed a picnic breakfast in the woods. Thus fortified, we climbed Leith Hill.

the hill-top view  
hidden by mist —  
an old pine

*Martin*

ending the morning with a visit to Druids Grove, near Mickleham. Here magnificent ancient yews still stand among trees that fell in the storm of 1987:

from torn trunks  
fungal colours soften  
to feed the forest floor

*Edward*

Along the way the variety of bird songs grew — chaffinch, hedgesparrow, chiffchaff, willow warbler, blackcap. We had lunch at Abinger Common, in a pub garden:

*Saezuri ya hanayome mido e ayumi-yuku*  
Walking to the church,  
The bride...  
In spring birdsong.

*Ayzen (trans SHG)*

and then parted company into what was, by now, a warm and bright afternoon.





## Reviews

**ENGRAVING THE SKY** by Bruce Leeming 1993 pp36 narrow A5 Richard Joseph £2.50 Nicely designed and printed: 13 pages of haiku/senryu at 5 to a page mixed with 13 pages of other poems, plus an intro by the author. BL tells how haiku first gave him a route out of the cul-de-sac of modern verse and later revitalised his mainstream writing.

There is an out-going & wide-ranging personality here, both seeking out and entering into what comes his way. In a number, the visualisation seems subordinate to the point being made, but there are plentiful exceptions, for example in the 'Sea' section: *A vast jade sea: /basking on my hand /a red ladybird.*

BL deliberately tries to create pieces open to more free and variable interpretation in the 'internal comparison' haiku, where the relation between the two poles of the verse is not so immediately obvious: *Roadside parsley /billowing; a beach /long ago.* There is little word-play or use of the colloquial voice, but the experiences behind the poems can be felt; and there are many original topics: *Summer Sunday /tinkling glasses, bright chat: /a wheatfield rippling*

The Scottish haiku have a particular vigour & their idiomatic speech tones add meaning. There is interest & variety in the mainstream poems, too.

Dawn Chorus Meet sketch by Ayzen



**HIERONYMOUS BOSCH IN SHANGHAI SHERATON** by Colin Blundell 1993 pp100 half-A5 Hub Editions (address as CB) £3.50 Attractive pocket book with cover photos of China. 24 page intro, 65 pp of 'haisen', 2 to a page. The intro in part expresses CB's enthusiasm, damped a bit by the rush into Capitalism, for the human variety he met on a tour in China. The other part attempts a definition of haisen. It's not completely clear whether 'haisen' is the usual convenient abbreviation for haiku/senryu or some composite which allows CB both to be objective and to make implicit comments. There are some interesting quotations from Sikong Tu & Meister Eckhart, but CB claims both that "haisen catalogue the minutiae of experience" and that "the haisen-moment occurs when things are suddenly 'apparelled in Celestial Joy'." Well, I'm not convinced.

In fact, these haisen are completely free of the 'stink of Zen'; though there is often a whiff of Chinese and other Art: *under the mountains /groups of people conversing /in the midday heat* The pieces are, as CB puts it, 'snapshots in 17 syllables' (neither more nor less): quick sketches which could be the verses in a haibun, memorialising the commentary in the introduction. Few are demanding or puzzling; but *the sky is falling — /the streets are ceilinged with green /pollarded plane trees* Few, if exotically picturesque, are disturbing of previous mental categories; but *I look in the eyes /of the Buddhist monks — no sign /of recognition*

The sequence forms a stream of images, both vivid & low-key, and there is at least one senryu that is more than just witty: *a short-lived affair — /the second glance of a girl /on a passing boat*

**FORGIVE US OUR TINS** by Fred Schofield 1993 pp56 narrow A5 Hub Editions £3.50 10 pages of haiku & 34 pages of other verse, much though in 3-line stanzas. FS has a variety of manners in this book, even among just the haiku. The following is fairly characteristic & makes an interesting contrast with the last of CB's quoted above: *girl of 12 stretched in the sun /if I'd taken your picture /you'd still be waiting* Neither the situation nor the feelings it arouses are clear, yet one is drawn to puzzle them out and dwell upon them. This is true of everything FS writes: some poems one may give up on, but only after the most intense visualisation and pondering. Like BL, FS often makes double-image haiku: *Mornings /as if you'd just landed /jet sprawled on the bed* (originally published in HQ) It's as if you were seeing both objects at the same time. There's also the view from the street — *the season for dogshit*; and a sort of fidelity to his impulse — FS abandons pieces when whatever he felt is not yet there: *Nurse going off duty /notices /incoming visitors* Still, you read on expecting something good.

The longer poems create some very deprived situations, but also lively little skits (the title is from one of these). There's a piece in perfect metre which could be a song lyric: *Do I mind if you take your nightdress off?* and the haikuesque sequence published in **Bare Bones**, *To know you*, where FS, in his minimalist manner, has a classic success. There are one or two things I don't understand at all: but, so what?

RDP



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